

# You Can Make a Difference!

## Be a Foster or Adoptive Parent



*Right now, there are thousands of New Jersey children who need the warmth and guidance of a family. Many parents are welcoming these children into their homes to provide safety, stability and love. These wonderful people are New Jersey's foster and adoptive families.*



### Foster Care

Foster families provide a home for children who have been abandoned, neglected or abused. These children are in need of nurturing families who will help them heal and grow.

### Adoption

Many children long for a forever family because they are not able to be reunited with their birth parents. Being an adoptive parent can change a child's life forever, as well as bring new joy and fulfillment to your family.

### To become a foster or adoptive parent:

- ▶ You must be at least 18 years old.
- ▶ You can be single, married, in a domestic partnership or civil union.
- ▶ You can live in either a house or an apartment.
- ▶ You can have your own children or be parenting for the first time.

### We will help you through the process of becoming a licensed foster/adoptive parent. This involves:

- ▶ Personal, employment, school and child care references
- ▶ Criminal background and child abuse history checks
- ▶ Pre-service training
- ▶ Interviews and assessments of all household members
- ▶ Home inspection

### Support services are available for children in your care:

- ▶ Monthly board stipend
- ▶ Health insurance
- ▶ Child care services for employed parents

Call or visit our web site:

**1-877-NJ FOSTER**  
**www.njfoster.org**

**1-800-99 ADOPT**  
**www.njadopt.org**



Department of Children and Families  
Division of Youth and Family Services

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Who are the children who need a foster family?

Families are needed for all children but especially siblings and children with special medical needs.

## Is a single person able to be a foster parent?

Yes. Foster parents can be single, married in a domestic partnership or a civil union. The important thing is their willingness and ability to parent.

## Is a foster parent able to hold a job?

Yes. Foster parents are able to be employed outside the home. In fact, DYFS may provide child care for your foster children while you are at work.

## How many foster children may I have?

This is determined for each family during the licensing process. However, foster homes are not approved for more than four foster children.

## What does the licensing process consist of?

The licensing process includes nine training sessions; a home evaluation; reference checks (medical, employment, personal, school); criminal history checks (including fingerprinting and local police checks); and a life safety home inspection. The licensing process usually is completed within five months.

## Once a child is placed with me, how long will he/she stay?

Foster care is considered temporary. A foster child may stay a few days or several months, depending on the child's family situation. If reunification efforts are not successful, foster parents are encouraged to adopt.

## What happens when the child returns home?

A foster child's return home is generally a planned activity, allowing the foster parent the opportunity to participate in the planning and to say good-bye to the foster child. This can be a difficult time, but the child's return home represents a success. Returning home is the goal for most children in foster care.

## Are there board rates for foster care?

Yes. A board payment is made to assist a foster family in providing food, shelter, transportation and entertainment for a foster child. A clothing allowance is added to the board rate.

Monthly board rates vary, depending on the age of the child. These rates may be higher if you are expected to spend additional time caring for the child as a result of extraordinary emotional or physical needs. The foster child's caseworker will evaluate this with you and determine whether you are eligible for higher board rates.

## When will I receive a board check?

Board payments are made on a monthly basis, no later than ten working days after the end of the month, i.e., the board check for January would be issued no later than the tenth working day of February.

## How are the costs of the child's health care paid?

Foster children are covered by Medicaid, which covers all necessary care and treatment.



Department of Children and Families  
Division of Youth and Family Services

# Support for Families

## Foster/Relative Care

While a child is placed in your home, you will receive a monthly board payment, a clothing allowance and health care coverage for the child. In addition, you may be eligible for one or more of the following supportive services:

- ▶ Child care services while attending foster parent training or working
- ▶ Reimbursement for special transportation needs
- ▶ Infant care, car seats and/or bicycle helmets
- ▶ Flex funds to meet a child's special needs (tutoring, camps, special activities, etc.)
- ▶ Special home rehabilitation funds through the Department of Community Affairs

Organizations such as Foster and Adoptive Family Services (FAFS) and their local county branches also can provide encouragement and assistance.

## Adoption

Most of the children adopted through DYFS have special needs. Adoption subsidy benefits are available to help their adoptive parent by providing:

- ▶ A regular monthly payment including clothing allowance to help parents meet everyday need
- ▶ A one-time payment that covers the legal fees related to adoption

- ▶ Medicaid coverage for the child to assist with any physical or psychological condition that is not covered by the family's own insurance
- ▶ Children with disabilities may be able to receive special services for a specific medical, health or equipment need, which is approved on a case-by-case basis
- ▶ Out-of-state medical coverage (for most states)
- ▶ A federal tax credit the year the adoption takes place

Preschool child care services may be available for subsidy eligible children. Child care services are funded by the Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development (while funds are available), for adoptive parents who work or attend school full-time.

Parents receive the full subsidy until the child turns 18 or until the child completes high school or other equivalent program, whichever is later. Such payments may not exceed the cost of providing comparable assistance in foster care. After the child turns 21, other state services may be available.



Department of Children and Families  
Division of Youth and Family Services

# Licensing Information

Whether you are applying to become a foster or adoptive parent or are a relative caring for a child, you are required to become a licensed resource family. The licensing process usually is completed within five months. This includes a Home Study Assessment Packet completed by DYFS/contract agency that consists of:

- ▶ A completed Resource Family application for all adult household members
- ▶ Child abuse record information background checks for all adult household members
- ▶ Comprehensive psychosocial evaluation
- ▶ Reference checks (personal, medical, employment, school/child care center) for all for members in the household
- ▶ Pre-service training for resource family applicants
- ▶ Life-safety inspection

Once your home study assessment packet is completed by DYFS/contract agency, it is forwarded to the Office of Licensing (OOL). The OOL will contact you to arrange for an inspection of your home. The home inspection includes:

- ▶ Interviews with household members
- ▶ Review of required documentation
- ▶ Life-safety inspection

## Interviews with household members

The OOL inspector will conduct an in-depth interview with each resource family parent and child in placement, if applicable. The interview will include questions regarding children's rights, children's records, training, supervision of children, visitation, education, recreation, religion, food and nutrition, discipline, health care and treatment and clothing issues. In addition, each member of the household (adults and children) may be interviewed in order to assess their perception of becoming a resource family home and/or their relationship with the child in placement.

## Review of required documentation

For each child in placement, various records about the child should be kept in the home. This would include documentation about the child's identifying information, medication log, health insurance, school information, and medical and dental examinations.

For the resource parent, a review of insurance information and driver's license, if applicable, is required.

## Life-safety inspection

The OOL inspector will need to look at each room in the house to make assessments regarding general maintenance, emergency evacuation, fire prevention, pet requirements, firearms and weapons, medication, personal care and hygiene, environmental sanitation and vehicle safety. Bedroom inspections include measurements to determine capacity, ensuring that there are two means of exit, an assessment of space and ventilation, bedding requirements and privacy. The licensing cycle is for three years; however, inspections are conducted annually. Inspections also occur to ensure any violations to the regulations are corrected and to conduct other types of inspections (e.g., a family relocated to another home in the state, a complaint inspection or to increase a home's capacity).



Department of Children and Families  
Division of Youth and Family Services

# Training (PRIDE)

Whether you are applying to become a foster or adoptive parent or are a relative caring for a child, you are required to attend training to become a licensed resource parent. This training is called **PRIDE – Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education**.

## **PRIDE has three major training components:**

- ▶ Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE Pre-service Training
- ▶ Foster PRIDE Core Training
- ▶ Foster PRIDE Advanced and Specialized Training

## **Trainings are all designed to teach knowledge and skills in five essential competency categories:**

- ▶ Protecting and nurturing children
- ▶ Meeting children's developmental needs, and addressing developmental delays
- ▶ Supporting relationships between children and their families
- ▶ Connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime
- ▶ Working as a member of a professional team

Integral to all three components is the belief that protecting and nurturing children at risk and strengthening all their families (birth, foster, or adoptive) requires teamwork among individuals with diverse knowledge and skills, but all working from a shared vision and toward a common goal. Foster and adoptive parents are essential members of this team. They, like caseworkers, require preparation and training to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to be effective members of the professional team.

## **Pre-Service Training**

All potential Resource Families complete PRIDE Pre-Service training. The PRIDE Pre-service is a program for recruiting, preparing, assessing and selecting prospective foster and adoptive families. The PRIDE program is designed to strengthen the quality of family foster care and adoption services by providing a standardized, consistent, structured framework for the competency-based recruitment, preparation, and selection of foster and adoptive parents. This program offers a competency-based, integrated approach to recruitment, family assessment, and pre-service training. Through a series of at-home consultations and competency-based training sessions, prospective families have an opportunity to learn and practice the knowledge and skills they will need as new foster and adoptive parents. The readiness of families to foster or adopt is assessed in the context of their ability and willingness to meet the essential competencies.

### **This training is offered in nine three-hour sessions which include:**

1. Connecting with PRIDE
2. Teamwork Towards Permanency
3. Meeting Developmental Needs: Attachment
4. Meeting Developmental Needs: Loss
5. Strengthening Family Relationships
6. Meeting Developmental Needs: Discipline
7. Continuing Family Relationships
8. Planning for Change
9. Making an Informed Decision: Taking PRIDE



Department of Children and Families  
Division of Youth and Family Services